

significant investment in education. By preparing teachers and students, we are paving the way to a brighter, more prosperous future.

I thank the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. ETHERIDGE) so very much. I think he recognizes as much as I do how digital divide and technological training is so important to students as well as teachers in planing for the future.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from California (Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD) for that point. She certainly has been a leader in this whole area of technology, in the digital divide, but she may want to comment on this further, because I think it is critical for our colleagues to understand.

It is not just to say, as the gentlewoman said, we provided the resources, because the E-Rate has been helpful working with the administration getting that out there so we get the rate down. So many times, people forget, and I think our colleagues here forget, even though we put in roughly 7 percent of all the funds at the Federal level for education, we can be a real catalyst by providing leadership and training and staff development and all of those things.

But when we talk about technology and hardware, it reminds me of someone who would buy a car and then do not let one drive it. Because we have so few pieces of equipment in some cases in some of our schools, those who do not have the resources, depending on where they may be in the country. That is wrong. It is absolutely wrong. It is like buying an automobile and say, well, we are going to park it here, and one gets to drive it every week or so.

But that is what we do with technology. We do not even let the teachers use it. Then until we have training on the staff, we are doing a better job. We have got a long ways to go. The gentlewoman may want to comment on that as it relates to this whole issue of the digital divide because that is really what we are talking about.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD).

Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD. Mr. Speaker, this is very true. As we have looked into the digital divide, we do find that, not only is that divide among the students in the classroom, but among the teachers as well.

We find that a lot of the computers that are given to students in the inner city area are really all outdated computers that cannot really be used for training, nor has the teacher had training on computers as well.

I have a program in the Watts area where we are now asking for old computers to come into that area where we will train young folks to prepare, do maintenance on old computers. Then once they have done that, we train them on that computer and then send that computer home to the parents for the kid to learn on.

This is a whole new innovative concept in helping parents as well as students to understand the realization and the importance of technology. We also find that teachers are very fearful because the curriculum and the liberal arts colleges are not putting technology in the curriculum for training or the teacher training program.

So the gentleman is correct. It is important that, as we look at the digital divide, we look at that division within the teacher training programs as well as the students who are, for whatever reason, have been given old outdated computers that really do not do anything in terms of teaching them.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, we have, and I am sure it is in several other States, certainly in North Carolina, where we have a group that actually are taking computers, corporate folks are providing for them. Once they will take all of the insides out of the computer, they are putting new components and booting them up.

The students, then, they are really becoming technicians for computers. Those computers then go to the classroom. In a lot of the cases, this came as a result of things we were already doing, but we escalated it during the flood of eastern North Carolina because we lost an awful lot of equipment in a lot of our schools. That is starting to take place now in a lot of places in our country.

What is happening to these young people, they may go into the university or they may go into the private sector, because they now are technically capable of making substantial salaries working on computers. That may be what the gentlewoman is talking about when she is talking about her digital divide.

Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD. Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what I am talking about. When the gentleman from North Carolina spoke about the E-Rate and the wiring and how that is important; but the most important thing is to get adequate computers into the classroom. The ratio should be as such where students will get the type of computer training that is necessary to ensure that the training that they have will be commensurate with their going out getting a job once they have completed their secondary education or even post secondary education.

I will say, as well as serving on the National Commission on Teaching on America's Future, as we look at the whole integration of technology and to the teacher training program, we find that a lot of the professional development that teachers are taking now are suggesting, or those who are giving that, suggesting that that professional development training require a certain amount of computer literacy.

I am very thankful that the gentleman from North Carolina sought to bring us to the floor today to talk about education. We cannot talk enough about education and about the opportunities that are out there for the

children of the future and teachers of the future if we, indeed, have the propensity to put the computers in the right spot.

So I see others who have joined the gentleman from North Carolina on the floor. I will move out if the others move in.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Mrs. CLAYTON).

Mrs. CLAYTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from North Carolina very much for arranging this special order on education which is dear to all of our hearts but certainly is one that he has provided leadership, and I want to acknowledge that leadership and that commitment and that love for it.

But I wanted to engage the gentlewoman from California (Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD), before she left, on her concern in raising appropriately the whole training of our students and providing the technology within our schools and put it in the context of something we are going to be doing very shortly in this Congress.

We are going to be voting on the H1-B visas, which is critical for the high-tech companies in making sure they have the staff capacity, not only to do the work they are currently doing, but also to be on the cutting edge in doing the technical research and responding to new opportunities. They have made a compelling case that, indeed, they do need them. I am convinced that they, indeed, need those high-tech individuals.

But what is troubling about the fact, and I believe they are correct, what is troubling about that is that our education system here in America has not produced a sufficient supply that they can feel they can rely upon unless they forever increase.

That is not to curtail bringing in intelligent, gifted individuals who may not be resident. I think that is what makes our country great, that we have that diversity. But to allow that to continue without putting intervention, we miss an opportunity.

So our rhetoric will be able to be tested. We have a window of opportunity, I think next week, if not next week, very soon. Given this need and our response, what do we say to the high-techs? Not necessarily in penalizing them, that is not what we want to do. But we want them to engage in fostering the education systems that are in our high schools, in our colleges. If necessary, what are they doing from China? What are they doing in India? What are they doing in Asia that automatically produces in that system a superior engineer? It is not that we are not producing engineers. It is not that we are producing programers but not apparently the ones that meet those criteria.

So there has to be a forcing of that relationship first to make sure we have a pool and understanding at the elementary and secondary work.